

Safety Practices During Production

Safety is paramount, and given today's tools, skills, and technology, there is never a reason to put anyone's safety at risk. No member of the cast or crew should ever be put in jeopardy for a shot. Anyone who is responsible for a dangerous situation and does nothing to correct it is subject by law to a charge of criminal negligence. We consider any place where shooting occurs a "set," whether it involves one or two persons or dozens of cast and crew members.

Regardless of their size, working conditions on film sets change from day to day, especially when working on location. The best way to prevent accidents is to be aware of the work environment and the equipment being used.

Call sheets are the best way to communicate safety information to the cast and crew. In the case of unusual circumstances such as stunts and special effects, safety meetings should be held with all the involved parties.

All members of the cast and crew must feel free to discuss any concerns they have regarding their safety and/or potential hazard. This can be achieved by encouraging everyone to voice their concerns or ask questions regarding issues of safety.

For larger shoots, the director should designate a crew member to be the safety officer. For smaller shoots, the safety officer may be the director themselves. Regardless, the safety officer plays a critical role in establishing and executing safe practices during production.

INSURANCE

Rutgers Filmmaking recommends that students, especially those checking out advanced equipment, purchase insurance to offset any personal costs incurred due to equipment damage, theft, or loss. Gallagher Insurance has created personal property policies catered specifically to Rutgers Filmmaking that automatically include \$25,000 in coverage for film equipment for as little as \$138 per year. Students are also strongly encouraged to purchase **extra liability insurance** as part of this policy to protect against personal injury at home or on set. For more info visit: www.collegestudentinsurance.com and use the drop-down menu to select "Rutgers University - Filmmaking BFA"

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY:

1. If someone is injured, seek immediate medical attention by calling 911.
2. If someone is injured on campus, contact Rutgers University Public Safety: (732) 932-7211

GENERAL RULES AND TOOLS TO HELP ASSURE SAFETY

Everyone can help ensure that the set is safe by encouraging and following general safety guidelines.

- **Encourage communication and teamwork.** Ask everyone to have their eyes and ears open and watch out for each other. Each person working on a project has to speak up if there is something they feel is unsafe or potentially hazardous.
- **Prepare.** Strategize your plans in advance as much as possible, and communicate them to your collaborators.
 - Visit locations in advance of the shoot, bringing key collaborators with you to assess safety, access, schedule, and shooting strategies. This should include identifying parking areas, restrooms, and shade and rest locations.
 - Hold planning meetings with collaborators before the shoot to review your intentions, plans, and concerns.
 - Share information. Gather and share everyone's email and phone number. Call sheets are the best way to communicate safety information to the cast and crew. A call sheet is a comprehensive list of the locations, scenes, cast, and crew for each day of production and is distributed prior to that day's shooting. Call sheets include maps to each location, call times for cast and crew, and pertinent safety information.
 - Identify nearby emergency facilities, such as a hospital, fire station, and police station. Include physical addresses and phone numbers on any call sheet or schedule you give to your collaborators.
- **Safety meetings should be held** for the entire crew upon arrival at each new location. Require additional safety meetings for all stunts, special effects, water, or other potentially hazardous activity. In the case of unusual circumstances such as stunts and special effects, safety meetings should be held with all the involved parties. Normally, that would include the director, the first assistant director, the director of photography, the stunt coordinator, the stunt performers, and any special effects crew involved.
- **Work reasonable hours.** Avoid work days longer than 12 hours, including commute time to and from the location.
- **Firearms.** All firearms are prohibited from all shoots, including those that require blanks. Any use of 'non-guns' or plastic 'prop guns' must have safety orange barrel tips displayed at all times.
- **Be aware of your surroundings.** When you arrive at a new location, begin with a walk-through of the area to see if there is any damage or danger. Keep an eye on your crew and lend a hand as needed. Throughout the work day, keep the use of electronic devices to a minimum to avoid distraction and do not use earbuds or headphones.
- **Demand good housekeeping on the set.** Walkways and work areas should be kept free of equipment and debris.
- **Require "no smoking" policies on set.** Provide designated smoking areas with butt cans. Be sure to empty and take away these cans at the end of the shoot.
- **Have firefighting equipment** (extinguishers, sprinklers, hoses, etc.) on set and make sure they are all in working order.
- **Practice safe cable management.** Make sure that cables are routed properly and cover them with mats, gaffer's tape, and/or crossovers in traffic areas.
- **Do not allow pranks or roughhousing on the set.** Distracting crew members from their jobs could result in injury

- **Ensure the crew is informed of weather and shooting conditions**, including clothing (heat, cold, rain, snow, etc.). Provide protective equipment such as safety glasses or hearing protection when needed. Be aware of general location safety concerns such as extreme temperature or precipitation, unsafe terrain, nasty critters, and vegetation.

SAFETY OFFICER

Designating a crew person to be a safety officer is crucial to creating a safe production environment on set. The safety officer will be the person who is responsible for making call sheets, who will be on set every day, who knows the project and its cast, crew, and locations intimately, who communicates well, and who is respected among the cast and crew.

The roles of the safety officer include, but are not limited to:

- Attending each location and tech scout to note the safety concerns. They will then include this information on call sheets or communicate it to the crew member making the call sheets.
- Lead safety meetings at the start of each production day.
- Assist communication between departments. Does everyone know the day's schedule and plan?
- Note every cast and crew member's dietary needs and allergens to communicate to catering and craft services.
- Provide and make accessible water, food, and medical supplies during production days if a caterer or craft services are not on the crew.

SAFETY MEETINGS

The best way to address safety concerns is to conduct safety meetings. Whether you are on location or on the soundstage, a safety meeting should be called to share information and address all safety concerns.

When to Call a Safety Meeting:

- The beginning of the day on the first day of shooting.
- When there is a new location or circumstance.
- When the current plans change.
- When there are stunts. Everyone on set must be aware of the stunt and how it will be performed and covered.
- When there are prop weapons. Everyone must be made aware of any prop weapon on the set.
- When there is new or specialized equipment being used.
- When there are any special effects. Everyone on set must be made aware of the special effect and how it will be implemented and shot.
- When the shoot is on or in water. All protocol and safety issues must be discussed.
- When there is a significant change in the number of cast and crew working on the production.

Potential Agenda for Safety Meetings:

- Discuss the rules that apply to that specific location.
- Discuss the day's action and establish staging areas.
- Identify any potential hazards and make the cast and crew aware of them.
- Discuss the power requirements at the location and electrical hazards.
- Establish safe work areas and off-limits areas.
- Loading/unloading and Parking at the location
- Provide guidelines for working with any safety concerns.
- Discuss emergency procedures. Point out all fire exits and fire extinguishers to discuss evacuation plans in the event of a fire or other catastrophe.
- Create a meeting place outside the building in case of emergency.
- Let the cast and crew know that if they have any safety concerns, they should feel comfortable voicing those concerns.
- Let the cast and crew know that they need to report any injury immediately to the safety officer.
- Point out sprinkler systems to the crew and make sure lights are not set up near sprinkler heads.
- Discuss company moves taking place during the day.
- At the end of the meeting, ask if anyone has any questions or concerns.

FIRE LANES AND FIRE EXITS

Means of escape in case of fire on set should be plainly identified and kept clear at all times. Built sets, props, and equipment should not obstruct the statutory fire signage used within studios, stages, or theaters. If necessary, temporary signage should be provided.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Even in a school or student setting, the set is a workplace. Clothing should be appropriate for the type of work being done. Jewelry, loose sleeves, exposed shirt tails, or other loose clothing should not be worn on set or around machinery where it might become entangled. Long hair should be tied back.

FOOT PROTECTION

Appropriate shoes should be worn at all times, particularly where there is a risk of injury from hot surfaces, electricity, corrosive materials, hazardous substances, falling objects, or heavy equipment and machinery. Flip-flops, high heels, or sandals are never appropriate on-set foot wear, and no one should ever be barefoot on set. If an on-camera performer must be barefoot, keep this to a minimum, requiring shoes during run-throughs and any off-camera time.

HAND PROTECTION

Wear gloves when the work involves exposure to cuts, burns, chemical agents, or electrical hazards capable of causing injury or impairments. Crew members who are working on set with construction and decoration, or those working with grip and lighting equipment, should arrive on set with a pair of durable work gloves. Do not wear hand protection where there is a danger of it

becoming entangled in moving machinery. Hand protection should be appropriate for the type of exposure (e.g. porous, where exposure is to cuts; non-porous [or non-porous over porous], where exposure is to harmful chemicals). Dispose of gloves that have been exposed to hazards, allergens, toxins or any material that may cause dermatitis, inflammation, burns or other damaging skin conditions.

EYE AND FACE PROTECTION

Wear eye and face protection when working in locations where there is a risk of eye or face injuries such as punctures, abrasions or burns as a result of contact with flying particles, hazardous substances, projections or harmful light. When creating wind effects, be sure to check the location for any debris that may be picked up by the fans. Provide goggles and masks to the crew when appropriate.

HEARING PROTECTION

Provide hearing protection when the cast or crew will be exposed to excessive noise.

FALLING

Falls are the single most common injury-producing accident on film sets. Whether it is tumbling from an overhead grid, slipping off a scaffold, toppling off a ladder, or tripping over a cable, the result can range from minor to fatal. Often these falls are the result of haste and/or not utilizing proper safety measures such as fall restraint systems, nets and guardrails.

The most important thing you can do to prevent falling accidents is to be aware of the tempo of the set. Have a sense of when things are starting to get hectic and out of control. And when they are – slow the pace down. Haste makes waste. If you see the crew starting to ignore safety concerns in order to move faster, you have a moral obligation to put the brakes on.

LADDERS

It is frequently necessary to use ladders to build or decorate sets and to hang lights or grip equipment. When using ladders, follow these guidelines:

- Inspect all ladders before each use for broken or missing rungs, steps, split side rails, or other defects.
- Never use a metal ladder near electrical wires.
- Never place ladders in doorways unless protected by barricades or guards.
- Never climb above the second rung from the top on a stepladder or above the third rung from the top on a straight ladder.
- Do not reach farther than arm's length on any ladder; move the ladder when necessary.
- Straight ladders should extend at least 3 feet above the top landing support point.
- Straight ladders should be tied down as close to the top landing support point as possible.
- Always use a 4 to 1 ratio (1 foot away for every 4 feet of ladder height) when using a straight ladder.
- Always face the ladder when ascending or descending and maintain a firm grip.
- If you carry tools, use a tool belt or a bucket attached to a hand line to pull equipment up and to lower it down.

ROLLING LADDERS

It is frequently necessary to use rolling ladders to build or decorate sets and to hang lights or grip equipment. When using rolling ladders, follow these guidelines:

- Never move the ladder while on it.
- Whenever possible, face the ladder and maintain three points of contact while climbing up or down.
- Avoid overreaching (the limit is one arm length on either side, without leaning the body past the side rails.)
- Only one person should be on a ladder at a time, with a second person as a spotter.
- Reposition the ladder to reach new areas. Never overreach, push, pull or “walk” the ladder while working on it.
- When using rolling “A” frame trestle ladders, never extend them beyond twenty feet or the manufacturer’s recommendation.
- Always lock the wheels to prevent any rolling or instability.

DISCLAIMER

Many possible health safety issues that can impact film production are included here. However, this does not purport to cover every possible contingency. There may well be situations that affect health and safety that have not been included. These safety protocols are intended to be adapted to other situations that may arise but are not explicitly stated herein. The Rutgers Filmmaking Center reserves the right to make modifications to the procedures and policies as necessary without advance notice.